

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

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TO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CB, UN

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN MILITARY SITUATION AND KHMER PEACE
INITIATIVE

REFS: A. PHNOM PENH 9131; B. STATE 146577

1. POSTS MAY DRAW FROM FOLLOWING DIA ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT
KHMER MILITARY SITUATION IN DISCUSSING KHMER OFFER OF UN-
CONDITIONAL NEGOTIATIONS (REF A).

2. THE CAMBODIAN ARMY'S PROGRESS IN SOME AREAS OF THE COUN-
TRY OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS -- HIGHLIGHTED MOST RECENTLY
BY THE PREOCCUPATION OF THE FORMER ROYAL CAPITAL AT OUDONG
-- TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF THE STING OUT OF THE KHMER COMMU-
NISTS' EARLIER DRY SEASON VICTORIES. IN FACT, IT CASTS
SERIOUS DOUBT ON THE INSURGENTS' SHORT TERM ABILITY TO RE-
TAIN THE MILITARY INITIATIVE AND REINFORCES PHNOM PENH'S
CLAIM, PUT FORTH IN THEIR PEACE INITIATIVE OF JULY 9, THAT
A COMMUNIST VICTORY IS NOT POSSIBLE.

3. AFTER A THREE-WEEK DRIVE UP ROUTE 5, GOVERNMENT TROOPS
ENTERED OUDONG ON 9 JULY TO FIND THE SHATTERED CITY ABAN-
DONED BY INSURGENT FORCES. LOCAL SECURITY ALONG THE NEARBY
TONLE SAP SHOULD BE IMPROVED SUFFICIENTLY TO PERMIT THE
REGULAR MOVEMENT OF BADLY-NEEDED AGRICULTURAL GOODS DOWN
RIVER TO PHNOM PENH.

4. OUDONG'S IMPORTANCE RESTS MOST WITH ITS BEING A FORMER
ROYAL CAPITAL OF HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.
THE COMMUNISTS OVERRAN AND DESTROYED THE CITY IN MID-MARCH,
REPULSED SEVERAL WEAK GOVERNMENT COUNTERATTACKS AND TOOK
FREQUENT OCCASION TO TRUMPET THE VICTORY AS THE CULMINA-
TION OF A SUCCESSFUL DRY SEASON MILITARY CAMPAIGN.

5. MEANWHILE, MILITARY ACTIVITY ON OTHER WIDELY-SCATTERED
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FRONTS AROUND THE COUNTRY HAS OVER THE MONTHS WOUND DOWN.
ONLY AT THE GARRISON TOWN OF KOMPONG SEILA IN THE FAR
SOUTHWEST ARE THE KHMER COMMUNISTS NOTICEABLY ACTIVE.
HERE THEY ARE CONTINUING TO PEPPER THE SURROUNDED DEFENDERS
WITH HEAVY INDIRECT FIRE.

6. THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT SUCCESSES NORTHEAST AND NORTH-
WEST OF PHNOM PENH AND THE OVERALL ABSENCE OF COMMUNIST

MILITARY ACTIVITY UNDERLINES THE PROBLEMS FACING KHMER COMMUNIST MILITARY FORCES THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE COUNTRY. COMMAND AND CONTROL DIFFICULTIES ARE NOW COMPOUNDED BY FREQUENT AMMUNITION SHORTAGES AND AN APPARENT RELUCTANCE BY BATTLE-WEARY INFANTRY UNITS TO FIGHT. INDEED, THE LACK OF DIRECTION IN INSURGENT MILITARY ACTIVITY PROBABLY REFLECTS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF INDECISION AMONG THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP PLUS COMBAT LOSSES OF IRREPLACEABLE CADRE.

7. WHILE UNDER PRESSURE EARLY IN THE CAMPAIGN, GOVERNMENT FORCES REACTED WELL AND TOOK ON SOME OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS WHICH RESULTED IN OVER 40,000 VILLAGERS COMING VOLUNTARILY INTO KOMPONG THOM IN JANUARY-FEBRUARY; 20,000 IN PURSAT IN MARCH; 10-15,000 IN LOVEK; 10,000 AT KOMPOT IN APRIL AND 15,000 AT NEAK LEOUNG IN JULY. IN ALL, SOME 90,000 VILLAGERS ELECTED TO MOVE VOLUNTARILY TO GOVERNMENT AREAS IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS. OVER 1 MILLION HAVE FLED COMMUNIST CONTROL SINCE 1970.

8. ON BALANCE, DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA, PARTICULARLY DURING THE PAST MONTH, HAVE LEFT THE COMMUNISTS LITTLE RETURN ON THEIR VERY COSTLY DRY SEASON EFFORT. THEY FIRST FAILED TO ACHIEVE A DECISIVE VICTORY IN THEIR PUSH TO PENETRATE PHNOM PENH'S DEFENSES IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, AND BY MARCH WERE FORCED TO SHIFT THEIR STRATEGY TO SMALLER-SCALE ATTACKS AGAINST LESS AMBITIOUS TARGETS IN THE PROVINCES. THE SHIFT IN INSURGENT STRATEGY, HOWEVER, ALSO PAID FEW DIVIDENDS. ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT FORCES WERE QUICKLY ROUTED IN THE OUDONG AREA, AND AFFORDED THE ENEMY A STRING OF CHEAP VICTORIES ALONG A STRETCH OF ROUTE 4 TO THE GULF OF SIAM, THE INSURGENTS WERE REPULSED WITH SIGNIFICANT LOSSES IN THEIR ASSAULTS DURING MAY AT KAMPOT, KOMPONG THOM, AND PREY VENG. THE RECENT KC REVERSE AT UNCLASSIFIED

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UDONG IS ICING ON THE CAKE.

9. COUNTRYWIDE, THE KHMER COMMUNISTS DID REMAIN LARGELY ON THE OFFENSIVE THROUGHOUT THE DRY SEASON, AND TECHNICALLY NETTED A SMALL GAIN IN TERRITORY. BUT, SINCE MARCH, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE INCREASINGLY FALLEN SHORT OF THEIR GOALS. THE COMMUNISTS' BASIC INTERNAL PROBLEMS, FACED WITH THE CAMBODIAN ARMY'S RESILIENCE AND SUPERIOR FIREPOWER, HAVE ENABLED THE GOVERNMENT FORCES TO INFLICT HEAVY LOSSES AND DEMONSTRATE THE TRANSIENT NATURE OF THE MUCH TOUTED COMMUNIST VICTORY AT OUDONG. NOW GOVERNMENT FORCES WHILE NOT COMPLETELY ON THE OFFENSIVE, ARE IN A POSITION TO REACT TO NEW COMMUNIST EFFORTS FROM THE GREATEST POSITION OF STRENGTH THEY HAVE ENJOYED SINCE EARLY 1973. KISSINGER

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